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AUTHOR McCue, Lydia L.
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ABSTRACT

This student booklet outlines seven steps to aid elementary and secondary school students in participating in a social studies county fair. The first step is an understanding of the fair rules. Second, the student decides whether to work in a group or alone, after reading advantages and disadvantages of both approaches. Step three, choosing a topic, describes nine categories and topics within those categories. Students may choose from history, economics, political science, geography, anthropology, sociology, psychology, interdisciplinary, or special theme topics. The fourth step lists sources of information for the research portion of the project. Step five outlines the research steps: stating the question, collecting information, organizing and summarizing, stating conclusions, and stating the importance of conclusions. Steps six and seven concern constructing a display and preparing for judging. The judging consists of an oral presentation and a written abstract as well as a visual display. (KC)

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Seven Steps for Preparing A Social Studies Fair Project

prepared by Lydia L. McCue
Coordinator,
Social Studies
Division of Instructional Learning Systems

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Schools
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Assistant State Superintendent
Bureau of Learning Systems

1981

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State of West Virginia
Department of Education
Charleston
25305

Dear Students:

Just recently, I expect that your teacher anncunced that your class would be involved in the Social Studies Fair. Your teacher probably also told you to start thinking about the kind of project you wanted to construct. Immediately, you were filled with questions! What is a Social Studies Fair? Where will the Fair be held? What kinds of projects are made? Where do I begin?

This booklet was written to help answer some of those questions. It was also written to give you some tips on preparing a quality project. Follow through the booklet step by step. If you have any questions about rules and regulations, ask your teacher to see a copy of the **Rationale and Guidelines**. When you finish this booklet, you should have a good idea of how to prepare a project.

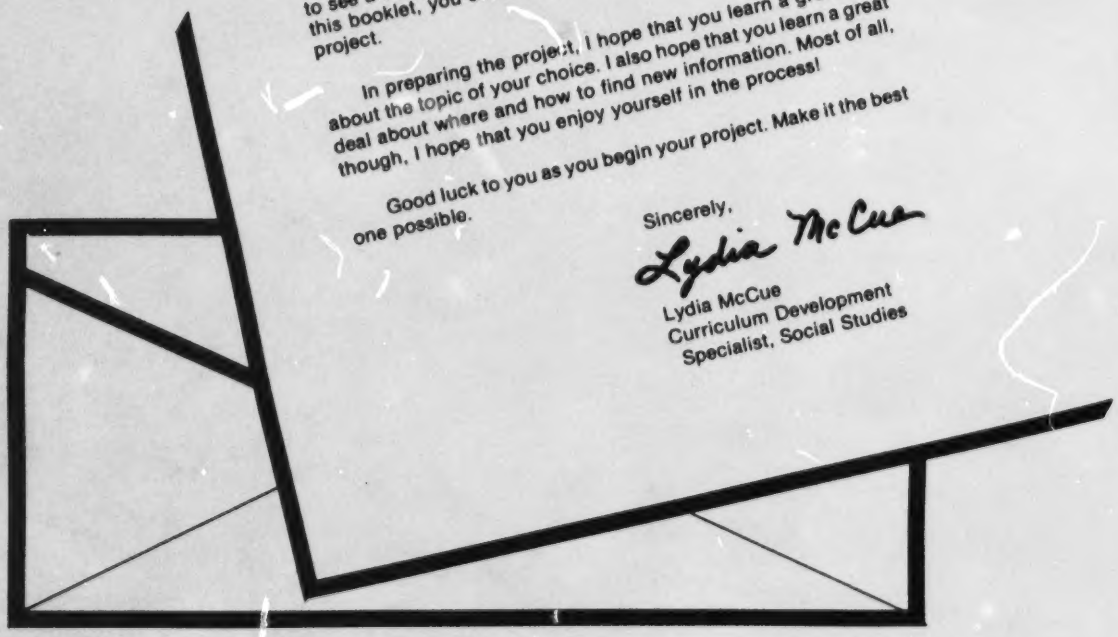
In preparing the project, I hope that you learn a great deal about the topic of your choice. I also hope that you learn a great deal about where and how to find new information. Most of all, though, I hope that you enjoy yourself in the process!

Good luck to you as you begin your project. Make it the best one possible.

Sincerely,

Lydia McCue

Lydia McCue
Curriculum Development
Specialist, Social Studies



Q. What questions need to be answered as you prepare your project?

A. There are seven questions that you need to answer. Many of the seven involve having to make decisions (SEE BELOW). A section of this book is devoted to answering each of the questions.

1. **Do I understand the rules and regulations of the fair?**
2. **Should I work alone or in a group?**
3. **What topic should I choose?**
4. **Where will I get the information?**
5. **What process should I follow as I investigate my topic?**
6. **How should I display my findings?**
7. **How should I prepare for the judging?**

STEP I - *Do I understand the rules?* 3

Before you begin your project, make sure that you are familiar with the rules. Listed below are some of the most important things you need to know. Check them off as you go down the list. If there are any that you do not understand, ask the teacher for an explanation.

____ 1. Projects are entered in one of three **Divisions:** Grades 4, 5, and 6 are Division I; Grades 7, 8, and 9 are Division II; Grades 10, 11, and 12 are Division III.

____ 2. Within your Division, you may choose from nine different **categories.** The categories are 1) history, 2) geography, 3) economics, 4) political science 5) sociology, 6) anthropology, 7) psychology, 8) interdisciplinary and 9) special theme.

____ 3. Projects are also classified according to whether they are **individual** or **group.** Individual means that only one person worked on the project. Group means that two or more persons worked on the project.

____ 4. When projects are judged at the State Fair, projects will compete against other projects of the SAME Division, Category and Classification. For example, a Division III, individual project in history will compete only against other Division III individual projects in history.

____ 5. Every project must have a title or theme. For example, a history project might have the theme "Air Transportation Through the Ages."

____ 6. Every project must visually show **what** you have learned and **how** you have learned about your topic. You may show this through pictures, graphs, charts, tape recordings, collections, etc.

____ 7. Every project must have a written abstract. This is a short 3-5 page written description of your topic, what you learned about it, and the methods or processes you went through to find out about the topic. It should also include a bibliography of your sources of information.

____ 8. Every project must have only **one** spokesperson. That person will answer the judges' questions and make a 3-5 minute oral presentation.

____ 9. You may ask others for help and direction, but you must do all the work yourself.

____ 10. A project will be disqualified if it is **any** larger than 30 inches front to back or 36 inches wide. Measure carefully.

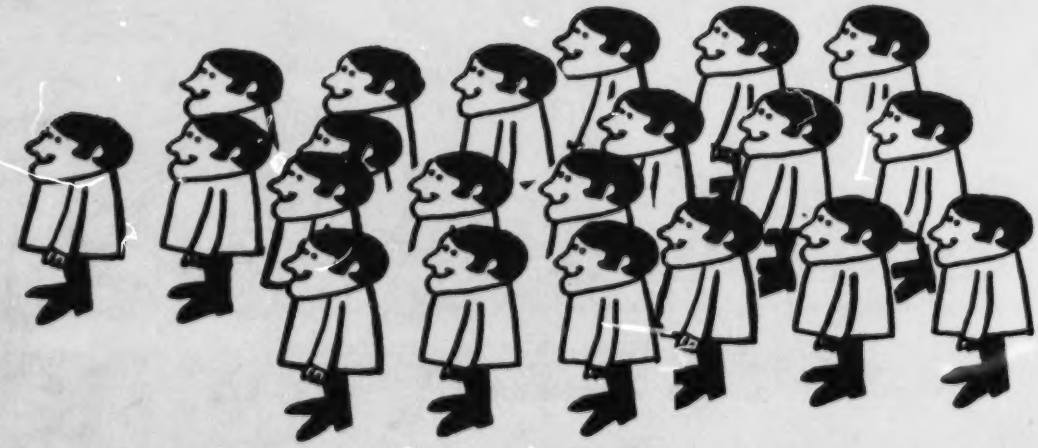
STEP II - *Should I work alone or in a group?*

As you decide whether to work by yourself or in a group, there are several things to consider. There are good and bad points about each. First, if you work alone, you must remember that you will be doing **all** the work. So choose a topic that is limited enough to be completed in the time you have. Working alone can be beneficial because you don't have to worry about when and where to plan a meeting. You can work anytime you choose. Also, you can make all the decisions about the project and do things just the way that you please.

If you decide to work in a group, there will be one or more other people working with you. Together you must decide on the topic to be investigated and the process and materials that will be used. You must also work out such things as when and where you will work and who will be responsible for what tasks. It is a good idea to put your plans down on paper and the dates that each thing should be accomplished and by whom. Everyone should agree at the beginning on these respective responsibilities and deadlines. Having these things written will prevent misunderstandings later on. Working with others is fun and you have the creativity, talents, and knowledge of others to improve the project. But be prepared because emergencies do come up and sometimes others do not carry out their responsibilities. You may have to do someone else's work in the end.

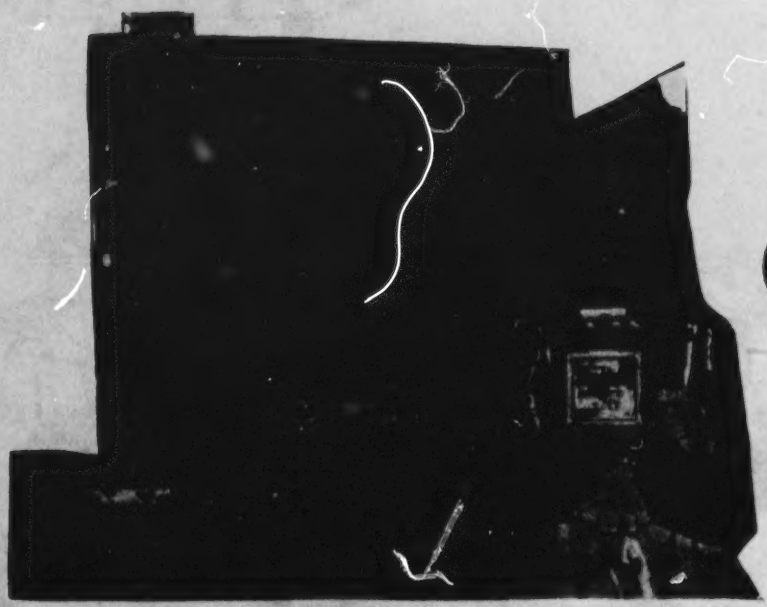
Alone...

...with a few friends...



...or the entire class!

GROUP



INDIVIDUAL

STEP III - *Choosing A Topic - What topic interests me?*

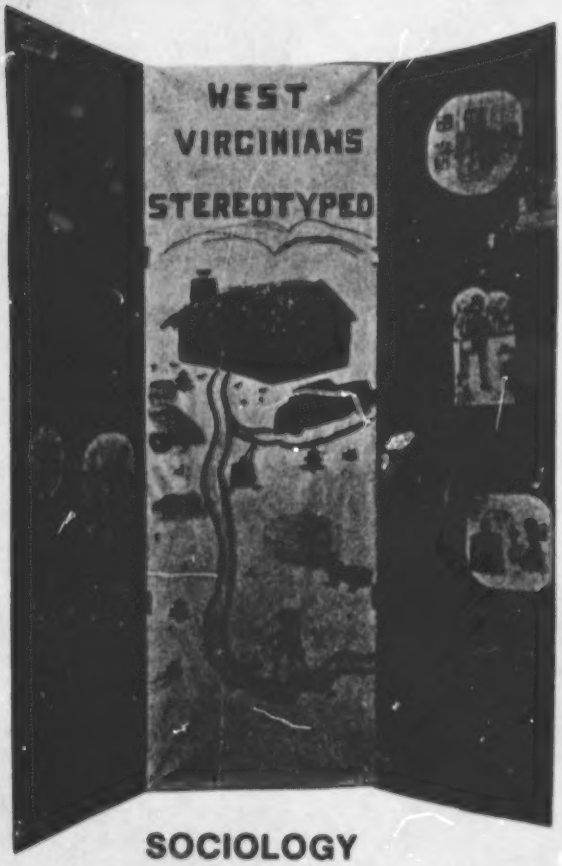
The next thing you or your group will need to decide is the theme you want to research. You should choose something that interests you and that fits within the nine categories of the fair guidelines. Be careful when selecting the topic that it is broad enough to allow you to find plenty of information. However, if you choose a topic that is too broad, you may find so much information that it fits no pattern; it will be difficult to reach any conclusions. You may become overwhelmed with it all. For example, the topic "Indians" would be far too broad to research for a single project. However, "Indian Contributions to Our Present Culture" might be more manageable.

Below are listed the nine categories and a description of each. On the next page are some topics from each category that may give you an ideas what to investigate. Also look at the photographs to see topics and displays of other West Virginia students. Note: Some topics are very difficult to categorize so you may need assistance from your teacher. If your project is not categorized properly, it may be changed by the fair director to the appropriate category.

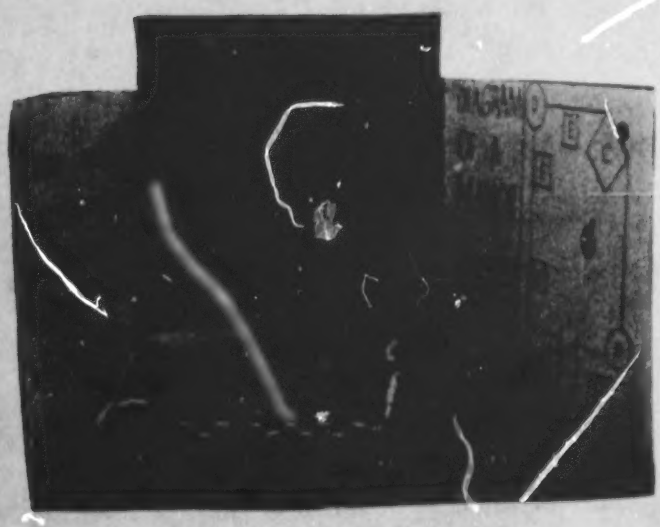
Nine Categories and Descriptions

Category	Description
1. History	The branch of knowledge that records and explains past events.
2. Economics	The branch of knowledge dealing with the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.
3. Political Science	The branch of knowledge dealing with the study of government, law making and law enforcement.
4. Geography	The branch of knowledge that deals with the natural features of the earth and the climate, products, and inhabitants.
5. Anthropology	A science dealing with man, especially his origin, development and culture.
6. Sociology	The study of the development and structure of society and social relationships.
7. Psychology	The science of the mind and behavior.
8. Interdisciplinary	This category deals with any of the above plus another subject: for example, science/social studies or English/social studies.
9. Special Theme	Each year a special theme is announced. Ask your teacher for this year's theme.

GEOGRAPHY



SOCIOLOGY



HISTORY

INTERDISCIPLINARY

ANTHROPOLOGY

STEP III *(Cont'd)* 8

Below are listed possible topics for each category. The suggestions are given to illustrate the "flavor" of some things you might explore. Do not necessarily try to pick from this list. Rather, choose something that interests you personally.

Category	Possible Topics
1. History	"Three Inventions that Changed the Course of History"
	"Similarities of Major American Conflicts"
	"Making a Living in the Colonies"
	"My Community Today - My Community 50 Years Ago"
	"The South after the Civil War; Japan after World War II - How Conflict Disrupts a Society"
	"The Great American Cowboy - Fact or Fiction"
	"Harriet Tubman - What Made Her a Great American?"
	"Ancient River Civilizations"
	"Comparing the Romans and the Greeks - What Did We Gain from Both Civilizations?"
2. Economics	"Cash, Credit Cards, and Checks - Positive and Negative Aspects of Each"
	"Running a Neighborhood Store - My Interviews with Five Store Owners and Managers"
	"A Look at T.V. Commercials - How Do They Influence Us to Buy?"
	"Producing and Selling a Product - How My Class Made Money for a Field Trip"
	"What Happened to the 5¢ Candy Bar? - Things that Influence Price"
	"State Taxes - Where Does Our Money Go and What Do We Get in Return?"
	"Advantages and Disadvantages of Specialization - Working on an Assembly Line"
3. Political Science	"Powers of the President"
	"A Look at Congress - Comparing the Senate and the House"
	"How Newspapers Influence Politics"
	"Can Only Rich Men Hold Public Office in America?"
	"Should Americans Pay for Political Campaigns?"

Category	Possible Topics
	"A Look at the Electoral College - Do We Really Pick the President"
	"What Happens When a Person is Arrested?"
	"Crime in West Virginia"
	"My Rights as a Juvenile"
	"Old Laws - New Laws-How New Ones are Made and Old Ones Are Eliminated"
4. Geography	"Reading a Map - Things to Know to Make Map Reading Easy"
	"Why Cities Grow - A Look at 5 Cities in West Virginia and Why They Developed Where They Did."
	"Sections of a City"
	"Great Deserts of the World"
5. Sociology	"Fads of the 70's - Origins and Outcomes"
	"The Changing Role of Women - Social Movement of the 70's"
	"Family Organization - A Look at Three Cultures"
	"What Affects Children More - Divorce or the Incompatible Family?"
	"Is Computerized Dating a Hoax?"
	"Schooling - Does it Meet the Needs of Today's Young People?"
6. Psychology	"Who and What Shapes Behavior - A Look at My Family and Myself"
	"How my Culture Affects What I Learn?"
	"My Personality - Did I Inherit a Bad Temper?"
	"Facing Death - What Can be Done to Help a Terminally Ill Patient?"
	"Teaching my Pet Tricks - A Study of 2 Different Methods"
	"Behavior Modification - Its Success in Treating Alcoholism"
7. Interdisciplinary	"Pollution - Its Physical and Sociological Effects on a Community" (Science and Social Studies)
	"Learning History through Poetry" (Language Arts and Social Studies)
	"Metric Comes to the U.S." (Math and Social Studies)

Category	Possible Topics
8. Anthropology	"Races of Man - How Are We Alike and Different?"
	"Marriage in Three Cultures - Why Are the Customs Different?"
	"Magic and Witchcraft - Where and Why is it Still Practiced?"
	"Margaret Mead - Her Contributions to the 20th Century"
	"Clothing Through the Ages - How Did It Reflect the Time?"
	"Customs from Africa - The Bantu, Bushman, and Ubangi"
9. Special Theme	This topic will change each year and will be based on some current issue or trend in social studies.

STEP IV - *Where will I find the information for my project?*

Where you find information for your project depends, of course, on the kind of project you are doing. Sources of information concerning one project may require only questionnaires or oral surveys to a sample of people; another project may be based on the study of books, magazines, and newspapers; and still another project may be based on government publications or those of some specialized agency. If you are confused about the best sources to use, ask your school librarian or your social studies teacher. The following are fruitful sources of information that you may wish to use:

A) Newspapers, books, magazines

B) Unpublished manuscripts (wills, letters, deeds, diaries)

C) Government publications (international, national, state, and local)

D) Publications by private agencies (manufacturers, chain stores, banks, public utilities, etc.)

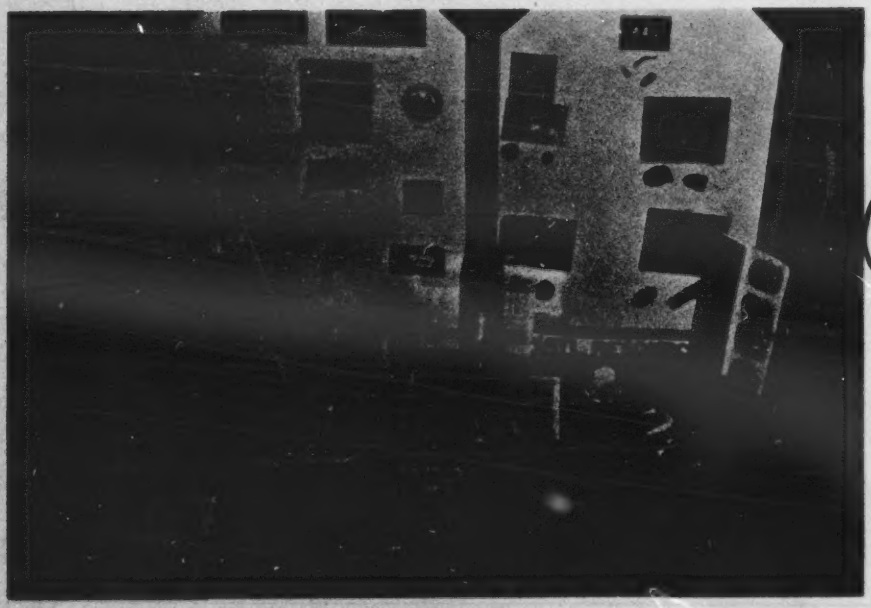
E) Physical remains (buildings, battle areas, mounds, museum artifacts)

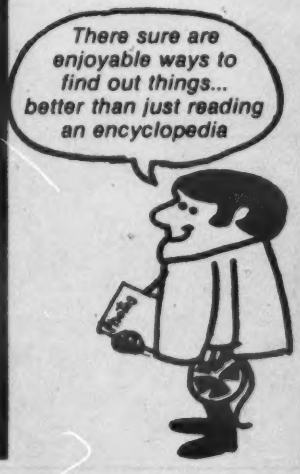
F) Oral interviews, polls, surveys, questionnaires

G) Old photographs or new ones which you have taken

H) Filmstrips, tape recordings, films, and slides.

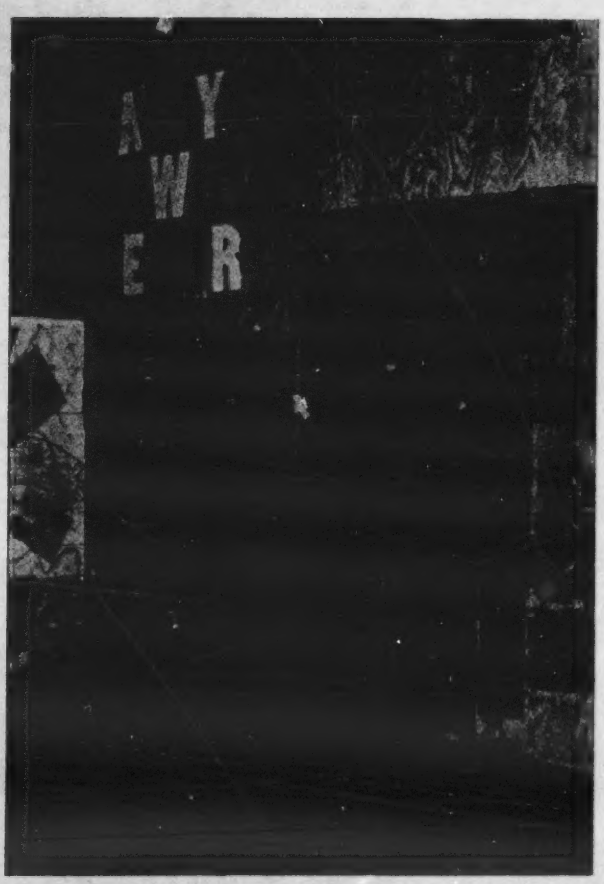
Below and on the adjacent page are photographs of projects which incorporated a variety of the sources listed above.





USING GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

CONDUCTING SURVEYS



USING NEWSPAPERS

USING
MAGAZINES

USING
PHOTOGRAPHS

CONDUCTING
OPINION POLLS

STEP V -*What process should I follow as I investigate my topic?*

After you have chosen a topic to investigate and have located possible sources of information, think very carefully about what you want to do with the topic. The best projects are **not** just "show" displays or "collections of things," but rather those projects that started out as a question in your mind, were investigated, then answered. For example, a student would probably learn more from studying a project like, "How do advertisers get us to buy?" than from merely collecting things and putting them in a fancy display. Try to follow these steps as you proceed:

1) State the question - Try to think about something that really interests you and that you have some questions about. Limit your questions to a rather specific area. "Why" or "How" questions may make better projects than "when" or "what" questions.
2) Collect information - Collect information to answer your questions from various sources. Sort through what you find and omit what is not useful.
3) Organize and summarize - Organize your information, examine it carefully, and summarize the findings. Write out the answer(s) to your original questions.
4) State the conclusion - Is the answer what you thought it would be? Explain why it is or isn't.
5) State the importance of the conclusion - Why was finding out the answer(s) important to you and perhaps to others?

If you follow this process, you should have a worthwhile project --- and you'll learn a great deal in the process, too!

How do advertisers get us to buy? Hmmm, that might be interesting
Now that I've collected all this stuff... which is appropriate to answer my question?
I've organized my information into the seven most common ways advertisers get us to buy.
TIME

Step I - State the question **Step II - Collect information** **Step III - Organize and summarize**

You gotta read these conclusions. Boy, did I find out some neat things!
Now I'll be more aware of why I buy things.
SALE
Brand X Shoes
No two alike

Step IV - State the conclusions

Step V - State the importance of the conclusions

STEP VI - *How should I display what I've learned?*

Color! Care! Accuracy! and Neatness! These are all things that you should be aware of as you construct your project. Make your project stand out because it is unique and looks pleasing to the audience. More important, be very careful that what you have is "correct." Check spelling, punctuation, and grammar. If you are handwriting information for display, write in ink and keep it neat. Do not cross out words or erase heavily

The materials that you use for the display do not need to be expensive. You will need some kind of background to put behind the display - it can be poster board, fabric on a frame, cardboard, plywood, etc. Somewhere in a prominent place, put the title of your project. Make it large enough for everyone to see. Include whatever objects are needed to show the information you've learned. Some students have built model coal mines, villages, log cabins, pyramids, and country stores. Others have displayed salt and flour maps, drawings, charts, or photographs.

As you put your project together, there are five things that your physical display must have.

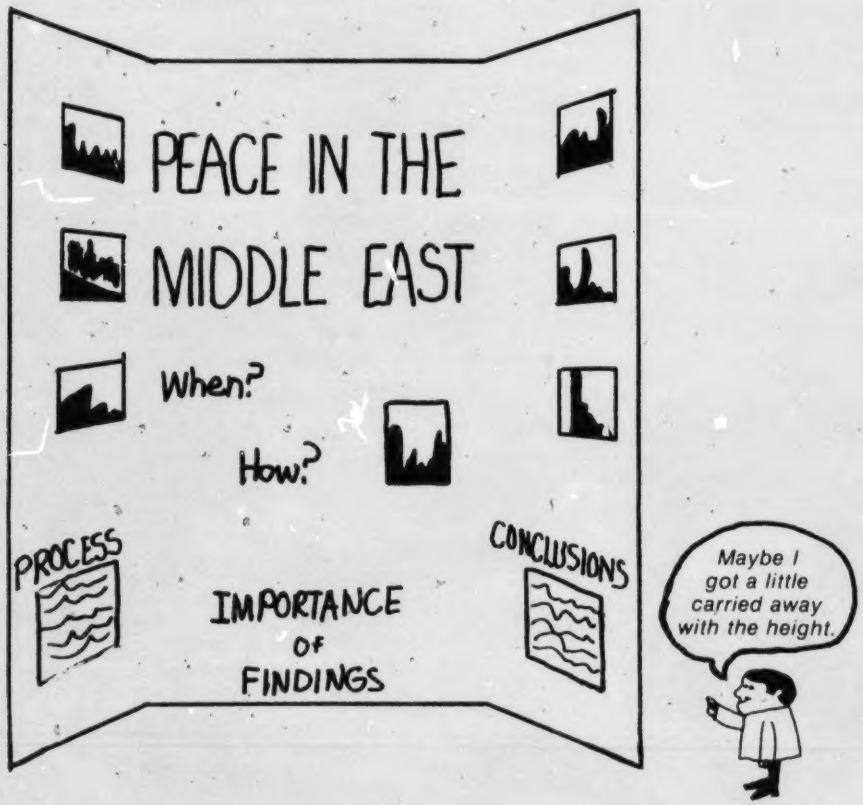
A) The TITLE or THEME of your project

B) How and where you gathered your INFORMATION

C) CONCLUSIONS that you reached

D) WHY or HOW the conclusions are IMPORTANT

E) A short written ABSTRACT (a 2 or 3 page booklet) that explains the process that you used (See next page) to investigate your topic.

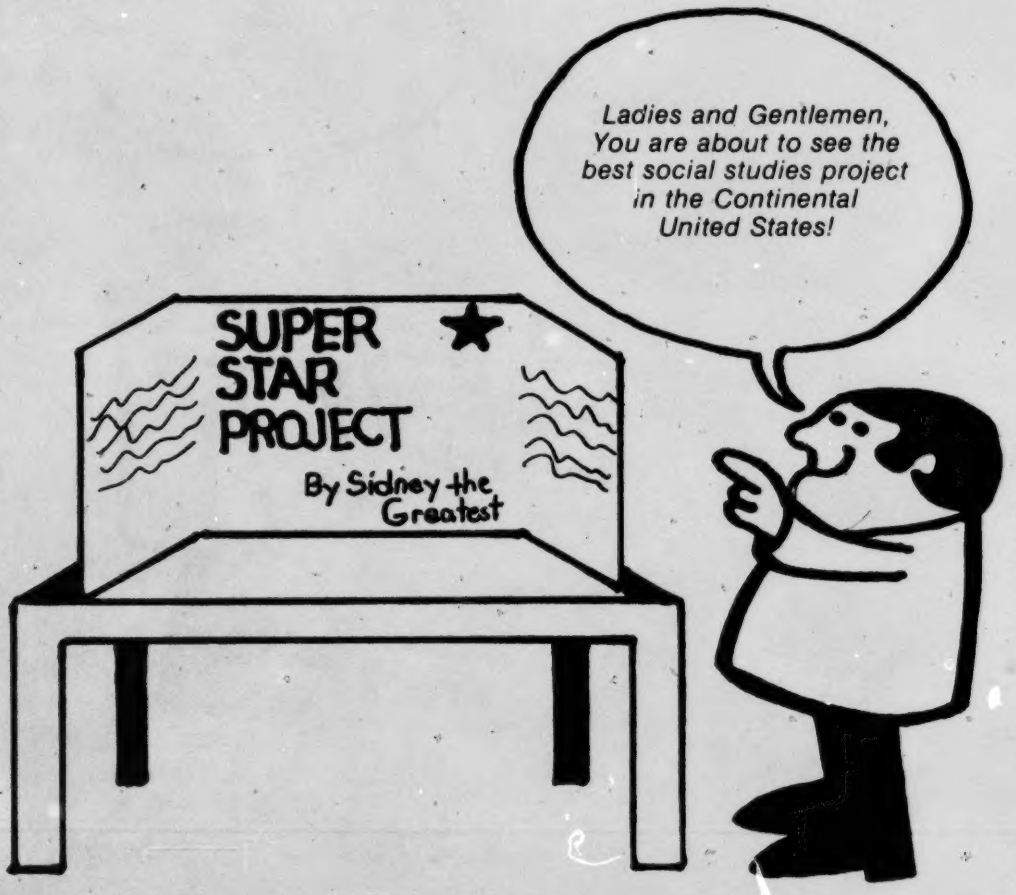


STEP VII - *How can I prepare for the judging?*

The most important part of the judging process is the oral presentation. During the presentation (3-5 minutes) you should explain to the judges why you chose your topic, how and from where you gathered the information, and the conclusions you reached. Be relaxed and enthusiastic as you speak. It's a good idea to have practiced your presentation several times in advance. Grab a group of friends, your parents, or a favorite teacher and have them listen to you. Practice will make you feel more comfortable, and perhaps you'll get some good ideas on how to express yourself more effectively. Remember it's not necessarily the biggest or prettiest display that wins, but the student who has learned the most. Convey how much you have learned to the judges.

Besides the physical display (See page 15) and your oral presentation, the judges will also examine your written abstract. An "abstract" is a brief written description of how you developed your project. It should (A) explain the project from start to conclusion, (B) be correct in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and (C) show purposes, methods, references, and other supporting work.

Don't be nervous about the judging. The judges are not there to ask trick questions or make it tough on you. Rather they are interested in you and in what you've discovered about your subject. Be pleasant and courteous and enjoy yourself. Show them that you're proud of your work and glad to be there.


Ladies and Gentlemen, You are about to see the best social studies project in the Continental United States!
SUPER STAR PROJECT
By Sidney the Greatest

CAUTIONS

at the Fair. . . .

1) Don't leave anything of value unattended at your project.

2) Make sure that you've entered your project in the correct Category and Division.

3) Find out the time that your project will be judged. Be seated at your project at that time.

4) Construct your project in such a way that it does not take a fleet of trucks to transport it. Think ahead. It will save you headaches and backaches later on.

5) Include your own heavy duty extension cord if you have electrical equipment (projectors, recorders, lights, etc.).

Now you should have a pretty good idea on how to proceed. Have confidence in yourself and work hard on your project. Even though you must do the actual work, don't be afraid to ask others for guidance.

If you are still wondering whether or not to try a project, read below what others had to say about the Social Studies Fair:

Kim Stooke, Nichols Elementary School, 5th grade - "I am very glad there was a Social Studies Fair and that I had the opportunity to be in it. I appreciated the time the directors of the fair and judges devoted to the production of the fair. This fair not only gave me the chance to increase my knowledge of a subject that I found interesting but the opportunity to share my interest and knowledge with others."

Tricia Farris, Milton Jr. High School, - "Recently I had the opportunity to participate, with much success, in the Social Studies Fair. The category that I chose was Geography, "Climate and Agriculture Throughout The World." But by doing this project and through my research I discovered I was involved in History, Science, Politics, and a great many more. Never have I learned so much about so many things in such a short period of time. The competition between students, the very hard work of promoters such as Mrs. Notter and cooperation from my Geography teacher, Mrs. Gibson, and knowledge gained was a great experience. I am already looking forward to next year's fair and hope it continues always."

GOOD LUCK!